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Discourse on Peace and Balance of Power in Early Eighteenth-Century English Political Sermons*

In the public debate on the English involvement in the War of the Spanish Succession, and over time, on the peace that would end the prolonged war, sermons occupy a special place among the various political mediums of the time. After briefly reviewing the main features of the political controversy, the present study specifically examines two political sermons by the English churchman John Adams (1662–1720), in which the discourse on balance of power is organically present, reinforcing the theme of the need for a “good peace”. In Adams’ sermons, published in 1709 and 1711, respectively, the notion of Christian joy and prosperity as well as the glad tidings of the securing of Protestant succession in the form of a future peace were given explicit emphasis alongside the discourse on balance of power. Both sermons were delivered on thanksgiving days, therefore – while supporting the anti-war, pro-peace Tory propaganda – they have a strong emphasis on predictions of the positive prospects for Christian spirituality. The paper focuses on the conceptual analysis of these delightful promises, showing how Adams considered the effects of a prospective peace on the Christian religion in general as well as on the future of the balance of power both at home and in Europe.

Keywords: political sermons, party politics, Queen Anne, War of the Spanish Succession, balance of power



* Supported by the ÚNKP-22-4-I *New National Excellence Program* of the Ministry for Culture and Innovation from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund. This study is a written version of a lecture given at the conference “Wellbeing in Early Modern Christianity: Perspectives and Practices for a Happy Life” organised by the Reformation Research Consortium (REFORC) and hosted by Campo Santo Teutonico, Vatican City on March 27–28, 2023.

Introduction

In the contemporary English political media reporting on the development of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), the question of English intervention, and then – especially after September 1710, when Queen Anne’s Whig government was replaced by a predominantly Tory ministry – on the peace to be concluded, one can frequently find reflections on the impact of war and peace on the future of balance of power. The use of a balance-of-power rhetoric was by then far from unusual in the European, and especially in the English political thought, as England had already seen itself as the protector of the balance of Europe since the end of the seventeenth century.¹ The notion became a fundamental principle of the eighteenth-century European politics and political publicism, as well as a key concept in the theory of interstate relations and peace treaties of the period, while in the decades following the establishment of the Utrecht Peace Settlement (1713–1714), balance-of-power politics emerged as a central element of English diplomacy.²

Despite, or perhaps because of all this, several scholars believe that early modern balance of power is “a cloudy and indefinite” concept, “complex, prone to change”,³ misinterpretation and misappropriation, “but popular with contemporaries, thus important and inescapable for us as *useful rhetoric*”.⁴ However, M. S. Andersen argues that it is worth treating the concept as a so-called “practical category” while proposes a “genealogical” conceptual history of it.⁵ When approached in this way, it becomes clear that the term – often used by contemporaries – was not just a rhetorical device, but in many cases a key political concept and an important element of contemporary political discourse, used by many authors as a central concept in their political practice. In this study, therefore, I wish to focus on the themes and contexts in which the concept of balance of power appeared in English political discourse during the last years of the War of the Spanish Succession overheated by political controversy. I wish to analyse specifically the less studied genre of the debate on the end of the war, the sermon literature of the period.

Although sermons did not respond to politics as directly as pamphlets or periodicals, many of them argued for the end of the war and the need for peace, while rhetorically exploiting the idea of balance of power. It is therefore worthwhile to examine more closely the printed products of this genre in terms of the balance-of-power discourse, which historical research has not attempted to do so far. After a brief overview of the English political milieu of

¹ KAMPMANN 1996. p. 328–332; THOMPSON 2011. p. 270–271.

² BLACK 1987. p. 48; DEVETAK 2013. p. 125–127; GHERVAS 2016. p. 404–405, 410–412; more recently: JANŽEKOVIČ 2023. esp. 570–573. On the theoretical foundations of early modern European, as well as specifically English, balance-of-power politics, see, inter alia: ANDERSON 1970. p. 196–198; BLACK 1983. p. 55–58; SHEEHAN 1996. esp. p. 1–24; DUCHHARDT 1997. esp. p. 7–18, 96–114, 259–284, 407–410; ARCIDIACONO 2011. p. 75–200, esp. 135–184; MALETTKE 2012; more recently: ANDERSEN 2018. p. 3–4; GHERVAS–ARMITAGE 2020. p. 11–12.

³ Quoted from ANDERSON 1970. p. 183.

⁴ Quoted from WICKLUM 1999. p. 7, n. 2. (Emphasis from me – B. S.)

⁵ ANDERSEN 2016. p. 5–8, 11–12, 50–52.

the War of the Spanish Succession and the emergence of the concept of balance of power at the turn of the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries, the present paper shall focus specifically on the printed political sermons of the period. I will discuss two sermons in particular by the English churchman John Adams from 1709 and 1711, respectively, in which the discourse on the political balance of the European states is integrally present, reinforcing the themes of the end of the prolonged war and the urgent need for a suitable peace for Britain.

The political milieu of the War of the Spanish Succession and the principle of balance of power in England at the turn of the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries

The War of the Spanish Succession – closely linked to the maintenance of the political order established by the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688–1689 – had a major impact on English politics already from its outset.⁶ As Charles Davenant – whose three pamphlets were published in the first half of 1701 – argued, England’s commitment to another war was necessary to protect the balance of power in Europe and to stop the universal monarchy of France.⁷ In Davenant’s view, who combined the Whigs’ vision of universal monarchy and the balance of power, the most important issue for England was to “maintain” its “Post of holding the Balance”, namely the position of a *balancer* in Europe.⁸

Balance of power was developed as a political model based on ancient, as well as Italian examples by the sixteenth century, and from then on it gradually gained ground in Europe in the period after the Peace of Westphalia (1648),⁹ when the idea of a political balance was becoming an increasingly important guiding principle in European political thought.¹⁰ The balance-of-power principle played an especially significant role in early modern English politics, where the use of the concept became increasingly commonplace from the second half of the seventeenth century in parliamentary debates, pamphlet literature, as well as in political journalism; England saw its position increasingly as the external leader of the continent’s states.¹¹ In terms of English domestic politics, the concept was especially used in the party-political conflicts of the Whigs and Tories, while in foreign politics it was primarily used

⁶ CLAYDON 1996. p. 52–63, 215–237.

⁷ DAVENANT 1701. p. 89–91, 100.

⁸ DAVENANT 1701. p. 87, 99. Davenant, an English economist and pamphleteer, wrote his 1701 pamphlets as a Whig opposition politician, but later became a Tory member of Parliament. For more on Davenant’s pamphlets in question concerning the conceptual relations between balance of power and universal monarchy, see more recently: THOMPSON 2009. p. 61–63; ONNEKINK 2009. p. 71; ANDERSEN 2016. p. 112–115; SCHVÉD 2019.

⁹ LIVET 1976. p. 34–91; SKINNER 1978. p. 6–15; VAGTS – VAGTS 1979. p. 557–560; STROHMEYER 1994; GELDEREN 2007; AUBERT 2008; more recently, with a specific focus on Renaissance examples: JANŽEKOVIČ 2019.

¹⁰ STROHMEYER 2015; GHERVAS – ARMITAGE 2020. p. 7–8; MILTON 2020. p. 104; JANŽEKOVIČ 2023. p. 563–570.

¹¹ SHEEHAN 1988. p. 31–37; DEVETAK 2013. p. 127–136.

against the Dutch during the 1650s, and as a consequence of the War of Devolution (1667–1668) launched by Louis XIV of France, it turned against the French to an increasing extent.¹²

The concept became firmly established after the Treaty of Ryswick (1697); political actors increasingly came to accept it as the norm for establishing the European state system, which was explicitly included for the first time in the Peace of Utrecht (1713–1714), closing the prolonged War of the Spanish Succession.¹³ In the course of the war, English domestic politics largely reverted to the earlier fundamental division between Whigs and Tories, whose growing dichotomy – also evident in religious tensions¹⁴ – continued to dominate party politics throughout the years of Queen Anne’s reign (1702–1714).¹⁵ Whigs and Tories generally held different views on the issue of war, which quite often led to sharply contrasting positions in the public debate on the question of English intervention and, over time, the need for peace. While the Whigs, due to their strong commitment to the Protestant succession, tended to fully support the war on the continent, the more isolated Tories were more suspicious of the English involvement, to which they were often explicitly hostile.¹⁶ Thus, almost from its outset, the War of Succession was a public catalyst for party-political rivalry in England.¹⁷

In early 1701, Robert Harley, the newly elected Speaker of the House of Commons, who later set up an extensive propaganda office to push the Treaty of Utrecht through the Parliament, tried to take a neutral stance on the outbreak of war.¹⁸ Numerous publications, sponsored by Harley, urged the need for domestic peace and a united front in the face of the nationwide challenge of wartime. From the end of 1701, a period of close parliamentary elections and mixed cabinets, the ongoing war was increasingly discussed from a party-political perspective. Although the entry of England into the war in May 1702 was not met with unanimous approval on both sides, and enthusiasm among the Tories was waning by 1704, the victory at Blenheim in the summer of 1704 and the subsequent English successes ensured that the war was widely accepted for the next few years.¹⁹

¹² PINCUS 1992; PINCUS 1995; THOMPSON 2006. p. 36–39.

¹³ LESAFFER 2019. p. 67–68. For a focus on the English diplomatic and intellectual history regarding the balance of Europe around the Peace of Utrecht, see more recently, inter alia: THOMPSON 2011; DHONDT 2015; ANDERSEN 2016. p. 95–133.

¹⁴ IHALAINEN 2009. p. 228–234; IHALAINEN 2011. p. 497–499.

¹⁵ CLAYDON 1996. p. 122–125, 148–190.

¹⁶ HOLMES 1987. p. 20–33, 51–81.

¹⁷ MÜLLENBROCK 1997. p. 29–30.

¹⁸ Robert Harley (1661–1724) started his career as a Whig politician, then became part of the new Tory government in 1710–1711. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1710 to 1711, then Lord High Treasurer to Queen Anne from 1711 to 1714. A key achievement of Harley’s administration was the Treaty of Utrecht with France in April 1713, which ended the English involvement in the prolonged War of Succession. HOLMES 1969. p. 216–237; MACLACHLAN 1969. p. 197–198, 207–208; SPECK 2004.

¹⁹ HATTENDORF 1987. p. 97–110; HOPPIT 2014. p. 9–11.

It was only from 1708 onwards that the prolonged war began to appear as a serious burden in the eye of the public, and the Whigs' demands for a vigorous continuation of the war began to lose support.²⁰ According to Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrock's monograph on the public controversy about the ending of the war, it was from the late summer of 1710 onwards that the most contentious issues concerning the outcome of the war were irrevocably placed on the public agenda, even though the publication of the rejected French proposals in 1709 already foreshadowed serious peace negotiations, followed by the increasingly sinister resonances of the Sacheverell trial in early 1710.²¹ The controversy about the end of the war and the urgent need for a suitable peace for Britain utterly appeared in the public media at the decisive stage of the conflict, between 1710 and 1713.²² All genres, even political sermons contributed to the debate so far,²³ sometimes organically applying the concept of balance of power.

During the summer of 1711, Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke – Queen Anne's Secretary of State for the Northern Department – began secret peace negotiations with France, as a consequence of which the preliminaries of the peace were signed in September 1711;²⁴ however, the Whig opposition attempted to round up support against *any* treaty with France. In the public controversy about the ending of the war, one of the most famous anti-war political pamphlets, Jonathan Swift's *The Conduct of the Allies* from November 1711, also explicitly used the concept of balance of power. In Swift's view, "a Change must be made in the Balance"²⁵ to end the war; therefore, reflecting on the recent change of government, a change is also required in the previous Whig policy according to him, in order to achieve a peace satisfactory to both Britain and its allies.²⁶

The British government subsequently signed a peace treaty with France in April 1713 and with Spain in July 1713; the term "balance of power" became part of the official language of diplomacy in an international legal sense with these peace treaties.²⁷ Naturally, the use of the concept is most prevalent in

²⁰ The Tories' "conspiracy" against the Whigs was born here, which Jonathan Swift later exploited relentlessly in his Tory journal *The Examiner*, and in his pamphlet *The Conduct of the Allies* (November 1711), ordered by Robert Harley himself. JACKSON 2015. p. 143–145.

²¹ MÜLLENBROCK 1997. p. 32. As Geoffrey Holmes states, "the Sacheverell affair of 1709–10 was the lurid climax of the Church's entanglement in party politics." HOLMES 1987. p. xxii.

²² HATTENDORF 1987. p. 221–230.

²³ MÜLLENBROCK 1997. esp. p. 157–163.

²⁴ HILL 1973. p. 241–263; DHONDT 2011. p. 370; DHONDT 2015. p. 44.

²⁵ "It is very obvious what a Change must be made in the Balance, by such Weights taken out of Our Scale and put into Theirs; since it was manifest by Ten Years Experience, that France without those Additions of Strength, was able to maintain it self [sic] against us." See: SWIFT 1711–1714. p. 58.

²⁶ Swift's pamphlet achieved extraordinary popular success; by the end of January 1712, it had sold more than 10,000 copies (and has been published at least five times), and Swift's anti-war and anti-Whig arguments also captured parliamentary and popular opinion throughout Britain. GERTKEN 2013. p. 186; JACKSON 2015. p. 149–155.

²⁷ The treaty with France – signed at Utrecht on 11 April 1713 – is the first which has made explicit use of the concept of balance of power in a number of instances and direct references; for example,

treaties, pamphlets and parliamentary debates of the period, but balance-of-power discourse was sometimes also prominently featured in various registers in a wide range of political media during the War of Succession, such as political treatises, reports and newspapers, and sometimes even broadsides, poems or sermons. The further part of the paper focuses specifically on the latter genre, the sermon literature of the period.

The debate on the need for peace in English political sermons in the last years of the War of the Spanish Succession

Among the different genres involved in the debate on the English participation, and over time, in the discussions on the peace that would end the ongoing war, sermons occupy a special place. They had to follow the rhythm of the ecclesiastical year, and in most cases they were written for special occasions, for example thanksgiving celebrations ordered by the monarch; all these factors limited the discursive adaptability of the genre, which, while alluding to certain current political events, did not respond to politics in the same direct way such as pamphlets, periodicals, or broadsides.²⁸ Nevertheless, the concept of balance of power can be found in several printed English sermons in strong conceptual connection with the argument about the end of the war. In this way, it is worthwhile to examine in more depth the printed products of this genre from the perspective of the balance-of-power discourse, which neither Müllenbrock's monograph nor the more recent literature on English political sermons of the period has attempted.²⁹

The introduction (*exordium*), explanation (*explicatio*) and conclusion (*peroratio*) usually formed the framework of a sermon, while the argumentation (*argumentatio*) and application (*applicatio*) formed its centre. Any reference to and commentary on contemporary issues was usually

where the French monarch admits the renunciation of the King of Spain to the crowns of France, and of the Duke of Berry and the Duke of Orleans to the crown of Spain, the peace agreement reads that "[...] by taking care at the same time, in persuance [sic] of the fundamental and perpetual maxim of the balance of power in Europe, which persuades and justifies the avoiding, in all cases imaginable, the union of the monarchy of France with that of Spain, [...]". See: OHT 27 CTS 475. However, the treaty with Spain – signed also at Utrecht on 13 July 1713 – is the most quoted in this regard as the first major European treaty to incorporate the term into its formal provisions, making it the first case when the expression is explicitly used in an international legal sense: the second article of it declared the treaty's main purpose as "[...] to settle and establish the peace and tranquility [sic] of Christendom by an equal balance of power (which is the best and most solid foundation of a mutual friendship, and of a concord which will be lasting on all sides) as well the Catholic King as the Most Christian King have consented, that care should be taken by sufficient precautions, that the kingdoms of Spain and France should never come and be united under the same dominion, [...]". See: OHT 28 CTS 295. For more on the significance of the Peace of Utrecht, see, inter alia: OSIANDER 1994; THOMPSON 2014; SASHALMI 2015; LESAFFER 2019. p. 68–70; 84–88; BURKHARDT – DURST 2021. p. 446; GELDER 2021. p. 953–957.

²⁸ MÜLLENBROCK 1997. p. 157.

²⁹ The most recent study of the sermon literature of Queen Anne's era is Hugh Joseph Claffey's thesis from 2018, in which Claffey mentions and even refers to the use of the concept of balance of power in numerous sermons printed during the reign of Anne for thanksgiving days, but without providing a detailed analysis of the usage of the concept. See: CLAFFEY 2018.

confined to the part of the *applicatio*, in which the theological argumentation could be applied by the preachers to current political situations.³⁰ Despite this structural rigidity, preaching in a political sense had its special place in the public debate on the War of Succession. As Pasi Ihalainen pointed out, spiritual literature in general was highly valued in the period, and as a result, the works of many preachers were printed almost immediately.³¹ Considering specifically political sermons, these were published in large numbers not only in England, but across Western Europe, and they were also available to the interested public at a relatively affordable price, therefore, these products provided an excellent forum for political propaganda and discourse.³² Moreover, Ihalainen also highlighted that political sermons can in many cases be considered a kind of “key genre” of the period, especially “in the popularization and polemicization of ongoing debates on theology and political theory”, while William Gibson stated that “preaching could be deployed for political purposes” in the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries, the “golden age” of British sermon culture.³³

Sermons were able to influence public opinion through their particular rhetoric, and for this reason they played an important role in the propaganda battle leading up to the Peace of Utrecht in two main ways. On the one hand, Müllenbrock’s analysis suggests that they provided a clear statement of general political issues within the formal constraints of the genre and were thus able to influence the political climate and create a certain degree of awareness of new political developments. This function was especially fulfilled by sermons delivered in the House of Commons – such as John Adams’ first sermon from 1709, analysed below – which were quite effective in conveying political messages within the strict limits of the genre.³⁴

Another, less frequently used function of sermons was to participate in overt party-political propaganda. This function places sermons alongside the other political genres of the period, openly complementing the propaganda activities of political parties. Joseph Trapp’s sermon, for example – preached in January 1711 and published in print in 1712 –, openly sides with the Tories, and its polarisation makes it an exception within the genre.³⁵ Trapp seeks to create a sense of a common political cause while he attacks the Whig

³⁰ MÜLLENBROCK 1997. p. 157–158. On the structural conventions of the genre, see for example: LESSENICH 1972. For more on seventeenth–eighteenth-century English sermon culture, see: CAUDLE 1996; CLAYDON 2000; EDWARDS 2009; IHALAINEN 2009. p. 228–234; CLAYDON 2011; DIXON 2011. On eighteenth-century English court sermons and specifically on the preaching culture of London, see: IHALAINEN 2012; FAROOQ 2013; FAROOQ 2014.

³¹ IHALAINEN 2011. p. 496.

³² CLAYDON 2000. p. 213–214; IHALAINEN 2011. p. 496; GIBSON 2012. p. 5–6. On the audience of peace sermons, see: JÜRGENS 2021; of court sermons: FAROOQ 2014. p. 160–161, n. 16. On the connections between English printed sermons and the public sphere of the period, see: CAUDLE 1996.

³³ IHALAINEN 2011. p. 496; GIBSON 2012. p. 5.

³⁴ Because of their effectively official character, these works were gradually and increasingly used by the government as a means of expressing its own political aims, indicating their long-term intentions and political direction in a cautious but quite clear way. MÜLLENBROCK 1997. p. 158.

³⁵ TRAPP 1712.

arguments vigorously in his sermon. In Müllenbrock's view, Trapp's work fitted integrally in the Tory propaganda network of the period, which – in a religious context – reinforced the general undertone that had been prevalent since 1711, namely the Harley administration's pervasive commitment to end the war.³⁶ Even those sermons whose authors showed more self-restraint than Trapp – such as the pro-government fast sermons delivered in the House of Commons – followed the Tory propaganda line that the continued bloodshed of the prolonged war could no longer be tolerated.

In a speech to both Houses of Parliament on 7 December 1711, the Queen herself made an emphatic reference to the war as having “cost so much Blood and Treasure”.³⁷ In her speech of 21 June 1712, she also effectively linked the promise of an end to the war to the securing of the European balance of power. In this speech, she explicitly stressed the urgent need for peace:

“At the same time that I thank you [i.e., the House of Commons] most kindly for the Supplies you have cheerfully [sic] granted, I cannot but let you know my Satisfaction in the near View I have of a Peace; since it will, in some measure, recompense my Subjects for their vast Expences [sic], and also lighten that heavy Burthen they have borne during the War [i.e., the War of the Spanish Succession].”³⁸

As regards the future peace that will ensure the balance of Europe, addressed jointly to the members of both Houses, Anne even explained that if the peace agreement would fail, the country would miss the only opportunity for a “real Balance of Power”:

“My Lords and Gentlemen, You have expressed how sensible you are of the Advantage and Security which accrue to *Britain*, and our Allies, by the Terms proposed for a Peace; and I need not mention to you the Mischiefs which must follow the breaking off this Treaty: Our Burthens would be, at least, continued, if not increased; the present Opportunity would be irrecoverably lost of *Britain's* establishing a real Balance of Power in *Europe*, and improving our own Commerce; and, if any One of our Allies should gain something by such a Proceeding, the rest would suffer in the common Calamity: But I hope, by God's Blessing, such fatal Designs will be disappointed.”³⁹

Müllenbrock even states that in the crucial stage of the debate, from January 1712, “the sermon – previously only used sparingly for the promulgation of political intentions – was fully integrated into the parties' armoury.”⁴⁰ From

³⁶ MÜLLENBROCK 1997. p. 160–161.

³⁷ JHC 1711–1714: p. 1. and JHL 1709–1714: p. 335–337. (7 December 1711)

³⁸ JHC 1711–1714: p. 275. and JHL 1709–1714: p. 487–489. (21 June 1712)

³⁹ JHC 1711–1714: p. 275. and JHL 1709–1714: p. 487–489. (21 June 1712)

⁴⁰ JHC 1711–1714: p. 275. and JHL 1709–1714: p. 487–489. (21 June 1712)

then on, Whigs tried to fend off the Tories' attack as best they could. An illustrative example of this is William Fleetwood's rhetorically sophisticated fast sermon of 16 January 1712, a clear Whig response to Trapp's above-mentioned politically engaged pulpit rant. Fleetwood states at the very beginning of his sermon that he is speaking "against such as delight in War",⁴¹ which carries on the theme of Queen Anne's speeches to Parliament, as she said the following about the Whigs' "interest" or "delight in war" (referring to the "Whig danger" in line with the imminent prospect of a "good Peace"):

"My Lords, and Gentlemen, I have called you together as soon as the Public Affairs would permit: And I am glad that I can now tell you, that, notwithstanding the Arts of those who delight in War [i.e., the Whigs], both Place and Time are appointed for opening the Treaty of a General Peace."⁴²

"[...] and I hope, that neither they wo envy the making a good Peace, nor who think it their Interest to continue the War [i.e., the Whigs], will be able to defeat our joint Endeavours for the Honour and Advantage of *Britain*, and the Security of all our Allies."⁴³

The strategy of the Whigs was to deflect the Tories' accusation that they were taking pleasure in participating in the war and they did their utmost to deflect this accusation onto France. The slogan of the Whig's "delight" or "interest in war" in the Queen's speeches – originally directed against the opponents of peace, namely the Whigs – is thus directed against the King of France in Whig propaganda, aiming to remind the public that Louis XIV had notoriously broken not only treaties but also his own promises.⁴⁴ Fleetwood thus capitalised on a slogan that had originally been used to slander the Whigs. The polemical part of his sermon begins with the following terse remark: "And therefore they [i.e., the Tories] who now tell us, that we entered *wrong into it*, are those I doubt, who would have us go *wrong out of it*."⁴⁵ By re-emphasising the justness of war, Fleetwood's sermon is a typical example of the Whig reaction against the Tory propaganda offensive.⁴⁶

According to Müllenbrock, political sermons played an increasingly marginal role in the controversy after the summer of 1712, giving primacy to other forms of political rhetoric.⁴⁷ All this can be slightly nuanced by the fact that on the Whig side there is indeed no significant sermon literature dealing with the questions of the forthcoming peace after 1712, but particularly in the year 1713, and especially in connection with the celebration of the Treaty of Utrecht, a number of Tory political sermons can be identified. These peace

⁴¹ FLEETWOOD 1712. p. 3–4.

⁴² JHL 1709–1714: p. 335–337. (7 December 1711)

⁴³ JHC 1711–1714: p. 275. and JHL 1709–1714: p. 487–489. (21 June 1712)

⁴⁴ FLEETWOOD 1712. p. 19.

⁴⁵ FLEETWOOD 1712. p. 21.

⁴⁶ MÜLLENBROCK 1997. p. 162–163.

⁴⁷ MÜLLENBROCK 1997. p. 163.

sermons, like their European counterparts,⁴⁸ were delivered in national thanksgiving services that were decreed by the monarch as part of the celebration of the Peace of Utrecht. They are similar in that they gave theological interpretation of the achieved peace; according to the authors' interpretation, the War of Succession was God's punishment for the sins of man and thus the peace was portrayed as a mercy, even as God's gift.

A particularly striking example of this is Benjamin Loveling's preaching at Banbury (Oxfordshire) on 7 July 1713, proclaimed by the Queen as a national thanksgiving day to celebrate the Peace of Utrecht.⁴⁹ The sermon, which was later also printed in Oxford, already refers in its title to the fact that the concluded peace was a gift from God. Loveling, the vicar of Banbury focuses specifically on the positive effects expected from the achieved peace, praising the work of the Queen and her government, the latter referred to as "an *Indefatigable Peacemaker*".⁵⁰ After enumerating the positive benefits of the peace, the vicar implicitly refers to the balance of power by saying "[...] you [i.e., the nation] may have, not only Peace Abroad, and Peace at Home", and then concludes with the following thought: "[...] enjoy *the Peace of GOD* in Heaven, that on Earth *passeth all Understanding*."⁵¹ All these confirms that even in 1713, political sermons continued to play an important role alongside other political media products in supporting the concluded peace treaty. Despite this, however, based on my research so far, the authors of these peace sermons from 1713 have not adopted the concept of balance of power, unlike the following two sermons by John Adams from the heat of the public controversy, which explicitly used the concept as part of their theological arguments.

Discourse on peace and balance of power in the sermons of John Adams

Educated at Eton College, and from 1678 at King's College (Cambridge), John Adams (1662–1720) travelled to Spain, Italy, France, and Ireland after completing his bachelor's and master's degrees, and on his return to England, he received a number of highly rewarding appointments.⁵² The clergyman was awarded an applied doctorate in theology in 1705, having previously served William III as honorary chaplain and remained in the service of the monarchy after Queen Anne's accession. He was one of the Queen's favourite chaplains;⁵³

⁴⁸ JÜRGENS 2021. p. 741, 746, 748.

⁴⁹ FARGUSON 2015. p. 207.

⁵⁰ LOVELING 1713. p. 21.

⁵¹ LOVELING 1713. p. 21–22.

⁵² SKEDD 2004.

⁵³ According to Farooq's analysis, the Queen's favourite preachers were all High-Church men, just as Adams himself. In the seventeenth century, "High Church" was used to describe those clergy and laity who placed a high emphasis on complete adherence to the Established Church position, however, over time, the high church position came to be distinguished increasingly from that of the Latitudinarians, also known as those promoting a broad church, who sought to minimise the differences between Anglicanism and Reformed Christianity. Eventually, conflicting views on certain religious, theological, and political questions divided the Church of England (cf. High and Low Churches), and the extensive involvement of the clergy in party-political conflicts as political

according to Swift, who reported in his diaries that he dined with Adams on several occasions at Windsor Castle, he was “very courteous”.⁵⁴ He had been elected Provost of King’s College (Cambridge) in 1712, a position he held until his death on 29 January 1720.⁵⁵

Neither the figure and oeuvre of Adams, nor more specifically his sermons published in 1709 and 1711, respectively, are mentioned in Müllenbrock’s monograph, nor are they thoroughly analysed in more recent literature, such as Jennifer Farooq’s or Hugh Joseph Claffey’s studies of the sermon literature of Queen Anne’s era.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, in several of his printed sermons, the themes of the end of the war and the question of peace, as well as the effectual use of the concept of balance of power can be found. Thus, both in terms of the discourse on the need for peace, and related to that, on the European political balance, Adams’ sermons are worth examining.

Among many other occasions, Adams preached at the public thanksgiving day of 22 November 1709, ordered by royal decree, and delivered his sermon in London’s St Paul’s Cathedral.⁵⁷ However, it remains unclear how the chaplain was chosen to preach, since there is no direct evidence that Adams was overtly political.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, he knew Simon Harcourt,⁵⁹ a close ally of Harley, who was by this time in favour of peace and had formed an alliance with the moderate Tories; therefore, because of his connections, Adams can definitely be seen as a Tory-affiliated preacher.⁶⁰ Harley continued to advise the Queen from time to time after his fall from office in 1708, through carefully encrypted letters, and renewed personal contact with her in early 1710, so

preachers contributed to the mixing of religious and political themes, issues, and questions. Under the reign of Queen Anne, the fortunes of the High Church party were revived along with the Tories, with which it was strongly aligned at the time. See: HOLMES 1975; HYLSON-SMITH 1993; IHALAINEN 1999; CLAYDON 2000; IHALAINEN 2011. p. 497–498.

⁵⁴ FARGUSON 2021. p. 281.

⁵⁵ Adams, considered an eloquent preacher, was often employed at public ceremonies, as we shall see, such as public thanksgivings ordered by the monarch. A total of fifteen of his sermons were published in print between 1695 and 1712. He was chaplain-in-ordinary to Queen Anne, and in 1708, also became canon of Windsor. SKEDD 2004; CLAFFEY 2018. p. 265.

⁵⁶ In her study, Farooq only mentions John Adams in a single sentence, without going into any analysis or contextualisation of his works, which is quite understandable, since the author deals exclusively with court-published sermons in her study. See: FAROOQ 2014. p. 164. In his thesis, Claffey mentions almost all of Adams’ works, and in one case he even refers to his use of the concept of balance of power, but without providing a detailed analysis of the usage of the concept in Adams’ oeuvre. See: CLAFFEY 2018. esp. p. 178.

⁵⁷ On the sermon literature of the thanksgiving celebrations during the reign of Queen Anne, see most recently: CLAFFEY 2018.

⁵⁸ According to Julie Ferguson, he was probably appointed because he held the position of the rector of one of the more important churches in London at the time: by 1709, Adams had received a number of important clerical positions, including rector of St Alban’s Church, Wood Street, City of London. See: SKEDD 2004; FARGUSON 2021. p. 280–281.

⁵⁹ Simon Harcourt (1661–1727) was an English Tory politician who defended Sacheverell in 1710. He became Queen Anne’s Lord High Chancellor in 1711, and he also took part in the negotiations preceding the Peace of Utrecht. HANDLEY 2004.

⁶⁰ Adams also dined not just with Swift but occasionally with Harcourt’s eldest son, and Harcourt was even a dedicated patron of Adams. CLAFFEY 2018. p. 19, 165, 265. FARGUSON 2021. p. 281.

they may well have corresponded in secret on this matter.⁶¹ Moreover, since Adams was a royal favourite, and as Queen Anne had been involved in the selection of her chaplains for previous thanksgiving celebrations, Ferguson believes it is entirely possible that the Queen not only recommended Adams for the job, but also influenced the content of the sermon in question.⁶²

The exact day of the sermon, delivered in November 1709, was appointed by the Queen's royal proclamation for a public thanksgiving, and as the full title of it indicates, it was preached before the Lord Mayor of the City of London, and the Court of Aldermen. As I will illustrate below, Adams' sermon clearly reflected the Queen's, therefore Harley's and the Tories' political views at the time. During his sermon on the occasion, Adams preached on Psalm V, Verse 11, the last part of which reads as the following: "let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee".⁶³ Adams told his congregation that "love is the foundation of a Christian's praise" and "only those who truly love God [...] can attain to any great degree of praise and thanksgiving for public blessings."⁶⁴

Since love in its many forms was one of the most frequently recalled motifs in the texts praising Queen Anne, Adams' sermon suggested that the Queen was the most appropriate person to give thanks for public blessings. After telling his audience that "only those who truly love God" are the best prepared for the duty of thanksgiving, Adams described the means and motives that may most effectually stimulate them to the discharge of this duty. According to him, the main motive was "the consideration of the great unworthiness of a guilty nation" [cf. the *topos* of the sinful war – B. S.], but an equally important reason for thanksgiving was the pursuit of the "common good", another term and concept often used by Queen Anne in her speeches.

Adams did talk about the ongoing war, but mainly to compare the conditions of people in Britain with those in countries where the ongoing war had a more direct impact on the population. With reference to the impending peace treaty, Adams, indirectly referring to the peace plans of the government, said:

"Let us see in what that Duty does consist, which is contained in those Words; *I will be joyful in thee*. As the Holy Passion of Religious Joy must rise from a *Worthy Cause*, so it must be directed to its *Proper Object only*. [...] But when the Blessings that we receive are of the highest Importance as to this World; and for our Eternal Welfare as to the World to come: When the *ancient Enemies* of our *Country* and *Religion* are *overthrown*; When *That Torrent of Popery* and *Arbitrary Power*, which had over-run great Part of the World, and threaten'd all the rest, has been forc'd to retire so far towards its former Bounds, and to prey only upon the

⁶¹ SPECK 2004.

⁶² FAROOQ 2014. p. 160; FERGUSON 2021. p. 280–281.

⁶³ "But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee." (KJV Psalms 5:11)

⁶⁴ ADAMS 1709. p. 5.

servile Supporters of them both; When we have so fair a Prospect of a firm Establishment of the Just Rights and Liberties of all *Europe*, as well as *our Own*; These are Great and Noble Occasions for a good Christian's Joy."⁶⁵

By the "Prospect of a firm Establishment of the Just Rights and Liberties of all Europe", the chaplain clearly meant the possibility of a future peace, which shall be "a good peace", thanks to the Queen and her new government. As Farguson points out, the style and content of Adams' 1709 sermon was highly unusual compared to other thanksgiving sermons of the time, and the ideas expressed were clearly intended to make the audience think about the consequences of the prolonged war and the benefits of a future peace. Indeed, Adams pleaded for peace and asked his audience to reflect on "the Common Good", which, he says, "may be Obtained, to *so great a Part* of Mankind, as well as Our Selves, by the compleating [sic] of these Mercies in a *General and Lasting Peace*."⁶⁶

In contrast to other sermons endorsed by the government, Adams basically avoided rhetoric against French machinations and frauds, although he did mention the French threat on occasion. Instead, he concentrated on telling his audience that it was they, first and foremost, namely the people of England, who should strive to create the desired common good through their actions:

"Nothing can enlarge the Heart more, than the Christian Religion, as founded in the Love of the *Saving Name of Jesus*: [...] This will teach us to consider chiefly, how to fix the Balance of Power, and by what Means to secure most effectually, the Liberties and Laws of distant Countries, of all *Europe*, as well as of our own; and with for *such a Peace*, not, as will give us more Leisure and Opportunity to pursue our several Vices; nor such a one as the Luxurious and Cowardly sigh after, but such as Cicero recommends, when he tells us, *Pax est tranquilla libertas*."⁶⁷

Adams successfully combined the idea of the common good and the upcoming peace in a quite innovative way with the idea of "fixing" the balance of power.⁶⁸ On the future peace, he stresses that the most important aspect of any peace treaty is the preservation of the "excellent constitution" of England:

"*The Peace* which every *Wise and Good Man* desires, is *that* which is the *Happy Effect of Liberties* being *Secure* and at *Ease*; *Secure* from the *Encroachment* of *Ambition*, and at *Perfect Ease*, under

⁶⁵ ADAMS 1709, p. 2.

⁶⁶ ADAMS 1709, p. 11.

⁶⁷ ADAMS 1709, p. 11. Adams here quoted the end of line 113 of Cicero's *2nd Philippic*, one of the speeches of accusation against Marcus Antonius, meaning "Peace is freedom in tranquillity".

⁶⁸ However, according to Claffey, Adams was actually defending the war when he said "fix the Balance of Power", as he probably attempted to attack party divisions – namely the political imbalance of the country – in this way, in order to divert attention from Sacheverell's fulminations. See: CLAFFEY 2018, p. 178.

the *Free and Impartial Execution of Good Laws*; and as as [sic] it concerns this Nation in particular, in the *Preservation* of our *Excellent Constitution*, both in *Church and State*.”⁶⁹

The last phrase, together with the lines quoted above, suggests that in the pursuit of peace, other considerations – such as the idea of “no peace without Spain” – have largely been rendered pointless by him.⁷⁰ Adams thus made the Crown’s, and therefore the Tories’ position on the need for peace apparently clear and widely known. The chaplain then concludes his sermon with an enthusiastic eulogy of Queen Anne:

“It is *SHE* that is the Foundation of all our Blessings; *SHE*, who us’d to be the bright Example of True and Fervent Praise in this Holy Place, and would have been so now, had not God thought fitting to mingle Afflictions with her Triumphs, to *compleat* [sic] Her Character, and make *Her* the *most Perfect* Example of every *Christian* Virtue. But more especially is *She* so, for *Her* Piety and Charity.”⁷¹

The modern reader might wonder reading the line “and would have been so now” that perhaps it was not physical or emotional, but actually political difficulties that kept Queen Anne away from St Paul’s Cathedral on 22 November 1709. As the Queen did not order another public thanksgiving in the Cathedral until the country could celebrate peace (which was not until 7 July 1713), Claffey and Ferguson both point out that it is reasonable to assume that her afflictions were primarily political on this occasion.⁷² Adams may have implied this in the above-mentioned line, while, as a whole, his sermon is an early but clear statement of the Crown’s position on the need for peace.

The future of balance of power is also important and exceptionally strong argumentative element in Adams’ other sermon of interest to the present study. This other sermon in question was preached before the House of Commons on 8 March 1710 in St Margaret’s Church, Westminster, published in print in the next year. It was also delivered at a public thanksgiving celebration, held to mark the beginning of Queen Anne’s “happy reign” eight years ago on that day. Adams deliberately begins it with a quote from the Book of Isaiah, which reads: “Kings shall be thy Nursing-Fathers, and their Queens thy Nursing-Mothers: They shall bow down to thee with their Face toward the

⁶⁹ ADAMS 1709, p. 11.

⁷⁰ “No Peace Without Spain” was a popular British political slogan during the War of Succession, suggesting that no peace treaty could be agreed with Britain’s main enemy, King Louis XIV of France, which would allow Philip, the French candidate to retain the Spanish crown. The phrase became a political slogan of the opposition to Harley’s Tory government and the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, first uttered in Parliament in December 1711, but soon adopted by the rival Whig political “movement”, who were increasingly seen as the “war party” as opposed to the Tories’ “peace party”. HOLMES 1987, p. 77–79, 95–96, 334–335.

⁷¹ ADAMS 1709, p. 13.

⁷² CLAFFEY 2018, p. 9; FERGUSON 2021, p. 282–283.

Earth, and lick up the Dust of thy Feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.”⁷³

The need to settle the balance of power is emphasised in the main part (the *applicatio*) of the sermon, combined with the praise of Queen Anne’s suitability to rule, which naturally permeates the whole thanksgiving preaching:

“Let it therefore be acknowledged with Joy and Thanksgiving in how high a manner we enjoy that Blessing [i.e., the true piety and justice of Queen Anne – B. S.], in the most pious and religious Sovereign [i.e., Queen Anne] that ever worshipped God from the *British* Throne; and because She is so, has God increas’d the Trust She has so well discharg’d, by the happy Union of Her Kingdoms [i.e., the union with Scotland in 1707 – B. S.]; Oh, may he do this still more and more, to the Relief of distant Nations, to the settling the Ballance of Power at Home as well as Abroad, to the Security of the Protestant Succession, and to the delivering down our Constitution both in Church and State, safely to all Prosperity.”⁷⁴

At the end, Adams explicitly refers to the positive results provided by the coming peace, effectively linking the biblical quotation mentioned in the beginning of the sermon, which slowly unfolds throughout the whole text. In this part, Adams implicitly suggests that one of the “nursing Mothers” in the biblical quotation is none other than the ruler of Britain, Queen Anne herself, whose “Succession to the Throne” was “so glorious”. In this paragraph, which is also the end of the sermon, the chaplain furthermore brilliantly connects the advantages of the coming peace using the same biblical image with the hope that

“[...] as *Spain* sunk under one nursing Mother of our Church [i.e., Elizabeth I; reference to the English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 – B. S.], so *France* is reduc’d so low under another [i.e., Queen Anne]: O may He soon finish this Work, that we may contemplate and imitate those Virtues in a solid Peace, which we have found so beneficial to us in a lasting War [i.e., the ongoing War of the Spanish Succession]; and may this happy Day return often to us, [...]”⁷⁵

Soon after Adam’s thanksgiving sermons, the endeavours for peace were temporarily interrupted as Queen Anne’s reign was threatened by one of the

⁷³ KJV Isaiah 49:23. The image of the Queen as the nursing mother of the nation, as Farooq states, served as a model for many other preachers who dealt with the role of the Queen during her reign. Farooq also cites a case in which the Queen herself chose this exact biblical passage for a sermon, which was none other than the official sermon for her own coronation ceremony (which she had appointed John Sharp to preach). See: FAROOQ 2014. p. 162–163. In the light of all this, it is no coincidence that Adams also chose this text, which he certainly did deliberately, to commemorate the Queen’s coronation sermon eight years earlier.

⁷⁴ ADAMS 1711. p. 18–19.

⁷⁵ ADAMS 1711. p. 22.

most serious political threats since her accession to the throne: the political turmoil caused by Henry Sacheverell's⁷⁶ seditious sermon delivered in London on 5 November 1709.⁷⁷ As Farguson notes, Sacheverell "denounced the dissenting community, linking them with the popish enemy", which "amounted to a denigration of the Glorious Revolution".⁷⁸ Sacheverell's notorious sermon was published in print almost immediately, and it is estimated that within a few months it had circulated in Britain in hundreds of thousands of copies, which was a phenomenal number by the standards of the time.⁷⁹

The controversy over Sacheverell's sermon undermined the authority of Queen Anne and her government and led to a controversial trial accompanied by widespread unrest. More recent literature, such as Farguson, considers that – despite the danger of the situation – Anne showed considerable composure during one of the most volatile periods in British political history, and was largely successful in presenting herself as supporting her government in defending the 1688–1689 Revolution while distancing herself from Sacheverell and his circle. The Queen was inevitably seen as sympathetic to the Tories, but her subjects did not generally associate her directly with Sacheverell or his supporters.⁸⁰

Conclusion

From the spring of 1710, the Tories campaigned to disprove the Whigs' ideology of resistance, paving the way for general elections in Britain. The main aim of their campaign was to call on the public and Queen Anne to dissolve Parliament and call a general election in order to exploit the anti-Whig sentiments aroused by Sacheverell's trial. The elections were eventually called, and the Whig government failed; however, Queen Anne was not an unfortunate bystander to all these events, as previous literature tends to emphasise. On the contrary; she played a decisive role in the fall of the Whig government and the rise of the Tories in 1710–1711.⁸¹ Therein, preachers as loyal to the monarch and her government as John Adams, played a powerful and conceptually influential role.

⁷⁶ Anglican clergyman Henry Sacheverell (1674–1724) gained national fame in 1709 after preaching a seditious sermon on 5 November before the Lord Mayor of London in St Paul's Church, then also printed it under the title *The Perils of False Brethren*. He was subsequently impeached by the House of Commons and, although found guilty, his light sentence was seen as vindication and he became popular in the country, contributing to the Tories' decisive victory in the 1710 general election. See: EZELL 2017. p. 452. On Sacheverell's sermon more recently, see: IHALAINEN 2011. p. 500–505. For more on Sacheverell's character and the scandal of 1709, see, inter alia: HOLMES 1973. and HOLMES 1976.

⁷⁷ HOLMES 1987. p. 47–48.

⁷⁸ FARGUSON 2021. p. 283.

⁷⁹ HOLMES 1973. p. 75; FARGUSON 2021. p. 282.

⁸⁰ FARGUSON 2021. p. 282–283.

⁸¹ FARGUSON 2021. p. 283.

As Jennifer Farooq highlights, the nation's focus shifted towards its Parliament, ministers, and politicians as well as its increasingly vibrant political journalism during Queen Anne's reign, thus sermon literature also faced more competition.⁸² "Official" sermons, such as court or peace sermons, were increasingly challenged by sermons delivered to both Houses of Parliament, the corporation of London or the various universities of the country. The two sermons of John Adams analysed in detail fall into the latter category, as the Queen's favoured chaplain preached one of his examined sermons to the Lord Mayor of the City of London and the Court of Aldermen (November 1709), while his other sermon to the members of the House of Commons (March 1710). In both cases, however, it must be stressed that Adams was Anne's chaplain-in-ordinary, and his sermons were preached on public thanksgiving days ordered and appointed by the Queen herself. Thus, his subtle but nevertheless clear and explicit support for party propaganda, which – especially in the case of his 1710 sermon – shows clear signs of a Tory peace-preparatory orientation, is not fortuitous.

Adams successfully combined the idea of the common good and the upcoming peace in a quite novel way with the importance of fixing the political balance in his sermon of November 1709, and in his another sermon of March 1710 with the importance of settling that balance also in Europe. Thus, the balance of power – both at home and in the continent – is an important and exceptionally strong element of Adams' argument in each of his two sermons analysed, alongside the discourse on Christian joy and prosperity as well as the glad tidings of securing the Protestant succession in the form of a future peace. In this way, Adams clearly and plainly conveyed to his audience and readers the position of the Crown, and thus of the Tories, on the need for a suitable peace for Britain – as did the authors of other Tory political media products of the time.

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⁸² FAROOQ 2014. p. 166.

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